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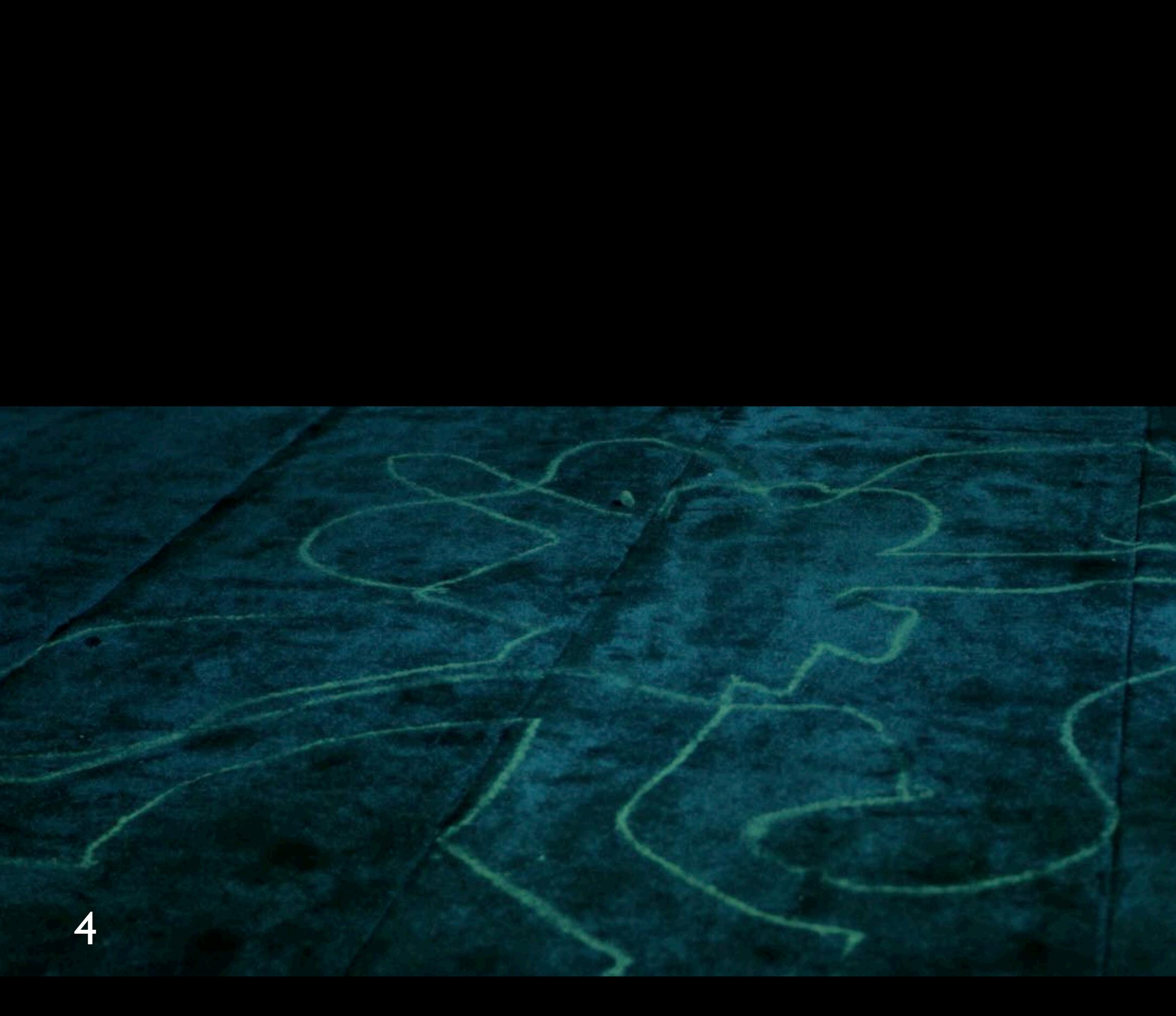
HACKER'S GAME

A Techno Thriller

With

Pom Klementieff   Chris Schellenger

King Orba   Alena Von Stroheim   Gayla Johnson

A film by Cyril Morin

LENGTH 90 min

"I feel I didn't shoot a movie as much as I hacked a movie". **C.Morin**

SYNOPSIS

Soyan is a computer prodigy that works for a company he previously hacked. This "online security" firm runs covert activities for high-profile clients around the world.

Loise is a cyber-detective who investigates war crimes for a human rights organization. She is obsessed with the truth.

Loise and Soyan meet on a rooftop and bond together through a virtual chess game.

But Soyan's employer, Russell Belial, has asked him to protect the same arms-dealer that Loise is determined to help to capture.

What is Soyan's real goal? Who will call the game now?

Loise and Soyan embark upon an intense but dangerous romance.
After being in a virtual world, will Soyan and Loise risk everything for true love?

INTERVIEW WITH CYRIL MORIN

Writer - Director - Composer

How did you develop the story for *Hacker's Game*?

CM: After I shot my first feature film, *The Activist*, which took place in 1973, I wanted to direct a contemporary story with young people trying to connect emotionally in the wired world of Internet. I wanted to do something with timely significance just a couple years in the future.

I was following how the media depicts hackers. The most common news story revolves around whether they are heroes or traitors. However, I was more interested in their motivations. What drives an intelligent young person to hack into a top-secret database to reveal something to the public? It requires a great deal of courage. And I was curious how several young hackers died just before they planned to release secret information.

This movie is being released at a time when hacking cases have received a great deal of attention. Did you know this when you started writing the script?

CM: First of all, the death of the hacker Aaron Swartz during the script writing, he influenced the character of Soyan. Hacking was already a hot topic when I began developing the film but it became even more important after the shooting was done, with the news about Edward Snowden. It become also a big deal in Hollywood after several movie stars had their iCloud accounts hacked but that was nothing compared to what happened at Sony Pictures recently. Then new hacking cases come up almost everyday and this phenomenon is changing our lives.

The film follows the news closely but goes further. It looks at how data can be altered to rewrite history. We recently have seen a lot of false information going viral and being picked up by major media. This is an issue in *Hacker's Game* as well as in our modern world.

Is the film a techno-thriller or a love story?

CM: Technology plays a big part in the love story. It is the only means for Loise and Soyan to come together. They have difficulty expressing their feelings directly because computers mediate and record everything they do. But it also has become a new way for people to come together.

So they use technology as a shield to hide behind, staying on the Internet to avoid the real world. Their relationship begins as a sort of video game as they court each other through a virtual chess simulator. Real love is a new feeling for them. Soyan and Loise eventually break through into reality and discover themselves.

How does your view of the Internet shape the film?

CM: As with many people, the Internet has become a basic part of my life. But I know that online information can be faked and manipulated. How do we believe what we are reading? I am suspicious of anything I can't confirm from multiple reliable sources.
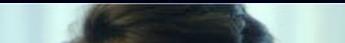
Nowadays, there is a lot of controversy about how big companies like Google or Facebook spy on their users and this is quite an important theme in the movie. I am scared about a future where facts can be changed for political gain or to manipulate people. But this has already started.

Tell us about the look of the movie.

CM: I decided from the very beginning never to put a computer display on screen. By not providing that visual aid, the viewer is forced to focus on the characters and everything that is happening offline. Visually, I represent the Internet with sequences in the film in which terabytes of data flow through cables. We also have graphics that represent data clouds when text messages are sent. These elements show how technology has become more virtual than ever.

I experimented with black light during certain sequences where Loise and Soyan put on these virtual reality cyber-glasses. I wanted to set apart these scenes in a tangible way for the audience. We don't know what they are seeing through the glasses. The music video we shot for announcing the movie, gives us some clues.

During the post-production, with Pitof, we experienced with a lot of innovative visual textures for the movie. The look is styled like a comic book or manga with a more digital, futuristic edge.

Pom Klementieff

Chris Schellenger

Alena Von Stroheim

King Orba

Gayla Johnson

Circus-Szalewski

How did you work with the actors?

CM: The biggest challenge was to find the leads for Soyan and Loise. After completing the script, I found Soyan among 2500 headshots. With Chris Schellenger (from Paul Schrader's *The Canyons*), we did a lot of workshopping to develop the character of Soyan.

For Loise's character, I looked at some French actresses in Los Angeles but none of them quite worked for various reasons. Then, by chance, I met Pom Klementieff who was finishing *Old Boy* (Spike Lee). It took only a few days for me to come back and cast her. Then I discovered her own biography was very close to that of Loise's character.

I spent three months on pre-production so we could do a lot of rehearsals. Then I rewrote a lot of the script based on it. Actually, that was a benefit for the crew on the shoot because we already figured out the scene through the rehearsal process.

Tell us about shooting *Hacker's Game*. And how did you work with the crew?

CM: I feel I didn't shoot a movie as much as I *hacked* a movie.
We had a small crew that took on an ambitious shooting schedule. Mobility was key because we had such a crazy schedule (we shot around seven scenes a day).

Romain Wilhelm is a young talented DOP. Hacker's Game was his first feature film. It was important to me to have a lot of young people in the crew so they could be on the same wavelength with the story.

The crew also was geographically diverse. Besides Americans, we had people from France, Japan, Romania, Belgium, Israel, Korea, etc... Amza Moglan, the second unit camera on the film, finally did the edit. He got all the emotional textures I wanted in the film and knew all the shots perfectly since he was on set for the entire shoot.

What about the music? You are also a film composer.

CM: From the very beginning I planned to use music from a Los Angeles band "Seven Saturdays." I needed a fresh sound and real songs to go to with the love story. I remixed their songs to fit with the soundtrack and I did the rest of the score myself. I had a very precise idea how to mix those sounds with electric guitars. But there is no code and no rules with electronic sounds. I had to reinvent my own music.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

" ...When you work by yourself, you're in the world of your creation alone. A director can push you in a direction you would never have explored on your own, into new countries, new worlds, new moods... And one work winds up energizing another..."

-- Cyril Morin, Variety interview, January 2009

Cyril Morin became a director as a sideline to a successful international career as a film composer with almost 100 soundtracks to his name. His music has won awards at numerous festivals and received acclaim from the international press. Among many honors, he was a nominee at the European Film Awards, the World Soundtrack Award and recently at the Jerry Goldsmith Awards.

He naturally became familiar with how films are produced and directed. He produced music videos before proceeding to direct his first short film Homere (1995) with footage from film archives. He also co-wrote and produced a documentary The Spirit of the Water (1995), a tribute to the Surfrider Foundation.

In 2011, he directed the short film The Application Cafe. Shot in the Californian desert, the sci-fi drama is a mythological interpretation of America.

In 2012, he wrote and directed The Activist, a thriller about political unrest by Native Americans at Wounded Knee. With nods to Brando, Nixon, and Vietnam, the film recreates the paranoid culture of the 1970s. The movie received critical acclaim and numerous awards from film festivals.

Filmography:

Hacker's Game / Feature film, 2014, France /USA (Director, Writer, Producer)

The Activist / Feature Film, 2013, France / USA (Director, Writer, Producer)

 Award: Best Film «Director's Choice», Sedona Film Festival (USA) 2014
     Best Film, Tenerife Film Festival (Spain) 2014
     Best Actress, Red Nation Film Festival, Los Angeles (USA) 2014

 Festivals: American Indian Film Festival (Best feature film & Two Best Actor Nominations)
     Valley Film Festival / USA - Nordamerika Film Festival, Stuttgart / Germany
     Byron Bay International Film Festival / Australie - Red Nation Film Festival (LA)
     Présence Autochtone (Quebec) - New York Independent Film Festival 2014 -

The Application Cafe / Short Film, 2012, USA (Director, Writer, Producer)
 Festivals: USA Film Awards, Dallas (Finalist) - Hollyshorts Film Festival, Los Angeles
    Short Film Corner, Cannes - Badalona Film Festival , Barcelone (Spain) -

Homére / Short Film, 1995, France (Director, Writer, Producer)

ARTISTIC LIST

Pom Klementieff	Loise
Chris Schellenger	Soyan
King Orba	Russel Belial
Alena Von Stroheim	Lena Leibovitz
Gayla Johnson	Alice Carson
Circus-Szalewski	Chris
Ted Mattison	Clift Brown
Ross Butler	Jeremy
Mehre Ihara	Eileen
Ahlam Khamis	Maid Fahra
Anthony Palermo	Jim Howard

TECHNICAL LIST

Cyril Morin	Author, Director
Romain Wilhem	Director of Photography
Pitof	Visual Producer
Amza Moglan	Editor
Anne Pruvost	Line Producer
Emett Casey	Sound
Pascal Vaguelsy	Post Production Supervisor
Colette Dahanne	Supervising Sound Editor
Vanessa Knutsen	First Assistant Director
Seven Saturdays	Composers
Cyril Morin	
Arnaud Gauthier / Music Package	Music Production
Bruno Mercere	Music Mixer
Cyril Morin	Producer
Aurelia Abate	Co-producers
Arnaud Gauthier	
Pitof	Associate Producers
Pascal Vaguelsy	

POM KLEMENTIEFF   CHRIS SCHELLENGER

A film by CYRIL MORIN

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